

“LIFE ON THE RUN”

A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF GENESIS (28:10-19-----JACOB’S LADDER) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON JULY 19, 2020----- (THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF AN ELEVEN WEEK SERMON SERIES THAT WILL TAKE US THROUGH SOME OF THE MAJOR THEMES IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS)

“HE CAME TO A CERTAIN PLACE AND STAYED THERE FOR THE NIGHT, BECAUSE THE SUN HAD SET.”

JACOB IS A MAN ON THE RUN.

HE IS EITHER CHASING OR BEING CHASED. IT STARTED IN HIS MOTHER’S WOMB WITH HIS TWIN BROTHER ESAU. AS ESAU IS COMING OUT THERE IS JACOB’S HAND REACHING FOR ESAU’S HEEL.

IT'S AS IF HE IS TRYING TO TRIP HIS OLDER BROTHER. THEIR BIRTH FORESHADOWS EVENTS TO COME.

ONE DAY ESAU COMES HOME FROM HUNTING. HE IS FAMISHED AND WANTS THE STEW JACOB HAS FIXED. JACOB OFFERS A BOWL FOR A BIRTHRIGHT.... BOTH MEN ARE HUNGRY AND THE DEAL IS DONE..... ESAU GETS A BOWL OF SOUP AND JACOB GETS A BIRTHRIGHT, HIS OLDER BROTHER'S RIGHT TO A DOUBLE SHARE OF THE INHERITANCE AND THE TITLE OF NUMBER ONE SON.....

BUT JACOB IS STILL HUNGRY AND WANTS MORE. HE WANTS HIS FATHER'S BLESSING, THE BLESSING THAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGED TO ESAU AS THE FIRSTBORN SON..... HE LIES TO AND DECEIVES HIS FATHER, ISAAC. "YES, IT'S ME ESAU, YOUR FIRSTBORN" JACOB SAYS TO ISAAC..... JACOB STEALS ESAU'S BLESSING. THERE ARE NO LEFTOVERS FOR ESAU..... THE BLESSING HAS ALREADY BEEN GIVEN AWAY..... ESAU GETS NOTHING.

**JACOB HAS CERTAINLY LIVED UP TO HIS NAME
AS ONE WHO SUPPLANTS..... DECEITFULLY HE
CAME AND TOOK A BIRTHRIGHT AND A
BLESSING THAT DID NOT BELONG TO HIM.....**

**AND NOW ESAU CONSOLES HIMSELF WITH A
PLAN TO KILL JACOB..... JACOB IS IN DANGER.
SO HE LEAVES BEER-SHEBA AND GOES
TOWARD HARAN.....**

***HE IS A WANTED MAN NOT JUST BY ESAU BUT
ULTIMATELY BY GOD. THIS JOURNEY IS NOT
JUST ABOUT JACOB'S PHYSICAL SURVIVAL. IT IS
A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.***

JACOB IS RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE.

MOST OF US, I SUSPECT, KNOW WHAT IT IS LIKE TO LIVE LIFE ON THE RUN. SOME OF US ARE RUNNING FROM OUR PAST, TRYING TO ESCAPE GUILT, REGRET, FAILURES, DISAPPOINTMENTS. SOME ARE TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE PAIN, LOSSES, AND BROKENNESS OF LIFE.

SOMETIMES WE JUST WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND THE PARTS OF OUR LIVES OR OURSELVES WE DISLIKE.

OTHER TIMES WE ARE RUNNING TOWARD THE FUTURE. FOR SOME LIFE ON THE RUN IS A SEARCH FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE NEW; A JOB, A RELATIONSHIP.

MAYBE IT IS THE SEARCH FOR ANSWERS. WHO
AM I? WHAT IS THIS LIFE ALL ABOUT? WHAT'S
MY PURPOSE? OTHERS, DRIVEN BY A MID-LIFE
CRISIS, CHASE AFTER MEANING AND YOUTH.
SURELY WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR IS OUT
THERE IN THE FUTURE SOMEWHERE IF WE CAN
JUST GET THERE.

MOST OF US KNOW PROBABLY KNOW WHAT IT
IS LIKE TO LIVE LIFE ON THE RUN DUE TO
SCHEDULES, CHAOS, AND THE BUSYNESS OF
LIFE. LIFE IS MEASURED BY ACCOMPLISHMENTS
AND TO DO LISTS. DEMANDS AND
EXPECTATIONS CHASE US.

***WE TELL OUR SELVES, “AS SOON AS I GET
CAUGHT UP THEN I’LL.....”***

**WE COULD EACH TELL A STORY OF LIFE ON THE
RUN..... IT MAY BE SPECIFIC TO US BUT IT IS
REALLY JUST ANOTHER VERSION OF JACOB’S
STORY..... LIFE ON THE RUN KEEPS US LIVING ON
THE HORIZONTAL AXIS. REALITY AND LIFE ARE
LIMITED TO THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE; TIME,
SPACE, MATTER, ENERGY..... WE MISS THE
SPIRITUAL AND TRANSCENDENT ASPECTS OF
LIFE, THE VERTICAL AXIS, BECAUSE WE ARE SO
BUSY RUNNING..... JACOB WILL SOON LEARN HE
CAN RUN BUT HE CANNOT HIDE.**

LIFE ON THE RUN EVENTUALLY TAKES US TO THAT CERTAIN PLACE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN BEER-SHEBA AND HARAN..... THIS IS NOT SO MUCH A GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AS IT IS A SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION....

JACOB HAS LEFT BEER-SHEBA, THE PEOPLE AND PLACE THAT ARE FAMILIAR..... HE IS NOT YET IN HARAN, THE NEW PLACE..... HE IS IN A CERTAIN PLACE, AN IN BETWEEN PLACE, A PLACE OF TRANSITION.... NEITHER HERE NOR THERE..... THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE WE ARE MOST VULNERABLE AND OPEN TO SEEING AND HEARING GOD IN NEW WAYS.

**THAT CERTAIN PLACE IS A NIGHTTIME PLACE
WHERE THE SUN HAS SET..... IT IS A PLACE OF
DARKNESS ILLUMINED BY THE UNKNOWN..... IT
IS A PLACE OF EMPTINESS FILLED WITH
PRESENCE AND MYSTERY. IT IS A PLACE WHERE
PHYSICAL EYES CAN NO LONGER SEE AND GOD-
DREAMS NOW LEAD THE WAY.....**

***ENLIGHTENMENT IS NOT ABOUT WHAT YOU
KNOW BUT WHO YOU KNOW, TRUST, AND
FOLLOW. IT HAPPENS NOT IN THE MIND BUT IN
THE DEEP HEART.***

**THIS IS A HARD PLACE, FULL OF STONES. YET IT
IS A PLACE OF GRACE.**

**WHEN THE SUN HAS SET AND DARKNESS TAKES
OVER YOU CAN LONGER GO ON. YOU CAN ONLY
STOP AND LIE DOWN..... IT IS A POINT OF
SURRENDER BUT NOT A PLACE OF GIVING UP.**

**WE STOP RUNNING FROM LIFE, OURSELVES,
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY FROM GOD. THE
DARKNESS TEACHES US THAT WE ARE NO
LONGER IN CONTROL OF OUR OWN DESTINY.**

**NOW GOD CAN APPEAR AND SPEAK. WE SEE
WITH NEW EYES AND HEAR WITH NEW EARS.
THE VERTICAL AXIS OF GOD'S LIFE, JACOB'S
LADDER, INTERSECTS THE HORIZONTAL AXIS OF
OUR LIFE AND RUNNING.**

**THAT POINT OF INTERSECTION IS ALWAYS AN
AWESOME PLACE, THE HOUSE OF GOD, AND THE
GATE OF HEAVEN.**

***JACOB'S LADDER REVEALS THE CONNECTION
BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH, DIVINITY AND
HUMANITY, THE UNCREATED AND THE CREATED.***

***IT APPEARS AT EVERY MOMENT IN OUR LIFE,
EVEN LIFE ON THE RUN.***

**THE LADDER JACOB SAW WAS NOT IN A
PHYSICAL LOCATION. IT WAS WITHIN HIM. IT WAS
NOT A VISION BUT A DREAM.**

THROUGH JACOB GOD REVEALS THAT THE
LADDER OF HIS LOVE, HIS LIFE, AND HIS
CONNECTION TO US IS FOUND DEEP WITH IN
OURSELVES, A PLACE SO DEEP THAT IT IS SEEN
IN THE GIFT OF A DREAM. WE CALL IT JACOB'S
LADDER BUT IT IS NOT POSSESSED BY JACOB.

**IT IS GOD'S LADDER PLACED IN EACH ONE OF
US.**

THE MIRACLE IS NOT THAT GOD SHOWS UP AND
BREAKS INTO OUR LIVES. THAT IS ALWAYS
HAPPENING. *THE MIRACLE IS THAT WE
RECOGNIZE IT WITHIN OURSELVES.*

THE LADDER IS REVEALED IN THE LIVES OF
FUGITIVES, IN THE DARK PLACES OF LIFE
WHERE THE SUN HAS SET, IN PEOPLE WHO
HAVE LIVED UP TO THEIR NAMES, IN THE HARD
STONEY PLACES, IN THE IN BETWEEN PLACES –
IN PLACES WE NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED.

“SURELY THE LORD IN THIS PLACE – AND I DID
NOT KNOW IT.”

**WHAT PARTS OF YOUR LIFE ARE LIVED ON THE
RUN? WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR? WHAT
ARE YOU RUNNING FROM?**

STOP RUNNING!!

**TRUST THAT CERTAIN PLACE BETWEEN BEER-
SHEBA AND HARAN. LET THE SUN SET AND DO
NOT BE AFRAID. GOD'S LADDER IS AND ALWAYS
HAS BEEN WITHIN YOU..... NO MATTER WHO YOU
ARE, WHERE YOU GO, THE CIRCUMSTANCES
YOU FACE, OR WHERE YOU RUN TO THE LADDER
OF CONNECTION GOES WITH YOU.**

IT IS A PART OF YOU.

***WAKE UP AND SEE THAT THE DREAM HAS COME
TRUE. "SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE AND
I NOW KNOW IT."***

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....AMEN!.....**